

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 AGR-05 SAJ-01 /036 W

----- 077710

R 131615Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8647

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMCONSUL MUNICH

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, EAGR, ECON, UR

SUBJECT: BREAD SHORTAGES REPORTED IN RSFSR, UKRAINE

1. SUMMARY. SHORTAGES OF BREAD, BAKED GOODS AND OTHER CONSUMER STAPLES IN FIVE RSFSR OBLASTS AND ONE UKRAINIAN OBLAST ARE REPORTED IN SEL'SKAYA ZHINZN' JANUARY 11. THE PROBLEM IS BLAMED ON POOR LOCAL ADMINISTRATION. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO SEL'SKAYA ZHIZN', A NUMBER OF LETTERS TO THE NEWSPAPER'S EDITORIAL BOARD COMPLAINED THAT "IN MANY VILLAGE STORES IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BUY BREAD, BAKED GOODS, AND OTHER CONSUMER STAPLES." SOME STORES HAVE BEEN CLOSED "FOR A LONG TIME", (THREE MONTHS IN ONE CASE), THE ARTICLE CONTINUES, WHICH HAS MEANT THAT RESIDENTS HAVE HAD TO LEAVE WORK AND TRAVEL TO CITIES TO PURCHASE

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GOODS.

3. OBLASTS IN WHICH SHORTAGES OCCURRED INCLUDE THE BELOGORODSKAYA, PSKOVSKAYA, ROSTOVSKAYA, RYAZANSKAYA, AND YAROSLAVSKAYA OBLASTS OF THE RSFSR AND DNEPROPETROVSKAYA OBLAST IN THE UKRAINE. THE ARTICLE IMPLIES THAT ONLY CERTAIN REGIONS OF THE OBLSTAS WERE AFFECTED.

4. A SUMMARY OF THE LETTERS WAS SENT TO THE ALL-UNION COOPERATIVE ORGANIZATION TSENTROSOYUZ, SAYS THE NEWS-PAPER, THE COMPLAINTS WERE CHECKED, AND SHORTCOMINGS IN CONSUMER SERVICES WERE ELIMINATED. STRONG REPRI-MANDS AND WARNINGS WERE ISSUED TO RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS AT THE OBLAST AND LOCAL LEVELS.

5. COMMENT. ALTHOUGH LOCAL INEFFICIENCIES ARE COMMON-PLACE IN THE USSR, PARTICULARLY IN THE CONSUMER SECTOR, THE BREAD SHORTAGES REPORTED BY SEL'SKAYA ZHIZN' UNDOUBTEDLY STEM FROM THE 1975 GRAIN SHORTFALL. ONE WOULD EXPECT THE SHORTFALL TO BE FELT FIRST IN OUTLYING AREAS SUCH AS THOSE ENUMERATED IN THIS ACCOUNT. THE ACCOUNT IS PARTICULARLY VALUABLE BECAUSE THE AREAS LISTED ARE VIRTUALLY INACCESSIBLE TO EMBASSY TRAVEL. WE ASSUME THAT THE SCARCITIES MUST BE RATHER SERIOUS IF THE LEADING FARM NEWSPAPER CONSIDERED IT NECESSARY TO ATTEMPT AN EXPLANATION. THE EXPLANATION IS THE OLD STAND-BY OF POOR LOCAL MANAGEMENT.
MATLOCK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SUPPLIES, GRAINS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MOSCOW00465
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760012-1119
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760163/aaaacdjx.tel
Line Count: 88
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <20 APR 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BREAD SHORTAGES REPORTED IN RSFSR, UKRAINE
TAGS: PINT, EAGR, ECON, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006